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26 January 1984

DCI Talking Points: Situation in Chad

Four French fighter-bombers yesterday attacked a rebel column moving north with two Belgian prisoners taken during an assault on the village of Ziguey (zee-gee), located below the defensive line drawn by the French. One plane was downed by SAM fire from the column, and French aircraft inflicted some damage on the rebel force.

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[redacted] late yesterday that the French planned to use light attack helicopters this morning to support a mission to rescue the two Belgian prisoners. We have no confirmation that such a mission has taken place.

- o According to Embassy N'Djamena, bad dust conditions in northern Chad may have blocked the rescue operations.
- o The rebel column already may have escaped to Faya Largeau.

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Both France and Libya probably are reluctant to risk a direct clash and a wider conflict.

- o Paris has consistently favored measured responses to Libyan and rebel actions in Chad to keep open the possibility of a negotiated settlement.
- o The French have brought up sufficient fighter-bombers, troops and helicopters to support a retaliatory strike against the rebels.

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- o The French may also consider providing Habre with enough additional supplies to permit limited offensive operations against the Libyans or rebels.

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